

Speech of Smt. D. Purandeswari MoS-HRD at the biennial function of the European Telugu Association 9th September, 2006 held at Kings Hall Stoke on Trent, West Midlands, U.K.

I deem it a great honour to have been invited here as the Chief Guest to this biennial function of the European Telugu Association. It is indeed a great privilege for this will provide me with an opportunity to a personal interaction with you on this occasion. I am, glad that the members of the Telugu community who have shifted to the European Countries have established Telugu European Association and formed a nodal body to articulate the problems and interests of the Telugu people residing in different parts of Europe. Not only that, I further understand that one of the avowed objective of ETA is to preserve, disseminate and enrich the Telugu cultural heritage and to maintain the identity of people of Telugu origin by providing a forum for Telugu literary, cultural, educational, social and charitable interaction among its members. The Association also promotes developmental projects in the areas of Telugu speaking people and helps the needy people in the case of natural calamities and emergencies. The aims and objectives of the Association are extremely laudable and deserve all support and encouragement. I am given to understand that the first

Biennial function of the ETA was inaugurated in 1995 by late Shri N.T. Rama Rao the, then Chief Minister of A.P with his benign presence and blessings.

Friends as you are all aware, Andhra Pradesh has a rich heritage and legacy. It is one of the front ranking states of the Indian Union with all round effective contribution to the development of our country in various sectors including politics, science, education sports etc., The political history of the Telugu people dates back to Kakatiya in Warrangal in the 11th and 12th centuries. Who is not aware of the glorious achievements of the rulers of the Vijayanagar Kingdom whose names are written in golden letters in Indian History and who are our illustrious ancestors? As a part of the composite Madras Presidency during the British rule Andhra Pradesh played an effective role in all developmental activities and we have been on the vanguard of the country's freedom movement. Presently the state is marching forward in rapid strides towards attaining all round development in the wake of the challenges and opportunities of globalization and liberalization. Our Telugu Language is a very rich and well developed language the biggest linguistic unit in India, second only to Hindi. I am sure that the glorious past of the Telugus and our ongoing determined efforts for an all round

development in India would give a further fillip to your various activities. On behalf of all Telugu people in India and on behalf of my own, I wish you a full measure of success in your grand endeavour.

It is a matter of great pleasure that the NRIs from India have of late started taking greater interest in the development of the land which they left years back. One reason for this I believe, is that the Western World has started recognizing India as a rising power, and the global superpower, the U.S.A., has recently cultivated her as a nuclear partner. This is a tremendous challenge and an opportunity for all of us including the non resident Indians. They should no longer consider themselves as impoverished immigrants fleeing a poor country but regard themselves as new bonds bringing emerging India closer to the developed world, by hastening the process of India's growth and development. Your land of opportunity now, is indeed, India. Her growth potential is limitless, with a billion consumers thirsting for good life, with a booming economy showering riches on entrepreneurs, and with a vast market capable of sustaining even the most developed nation of the world. A vast majority of the NRIs, it appears, have

started realizing this and so instead of clamoring for green cards many NRIs are applying for residency permits in India. I welcome this change in the attitude of the Indian Diaspora and hope that in the years to come they will take a more pro- active role in the development of their original motherland which reared them up and equipped them with the basic qualification without which their desire to go to foreign land for career advancement would have remained an unfulfilled and a distant dream.

It is not so easy to forget your motherland which has nurtured you in the early part of your life and has provided education and upbringing and made you, to stand on your legs. In Indian tradition we assign mother and motherland a position superior to heaven, as the following adage goes:

{Janani Janmabhoomischa Swargadapi Gariyasi} Our love for our motherland and patriotism are unquestionable. However to us, India is not only a physical or economic entity, or a mere geographical expression but a concept, an idealism which represents the high watermark of an ancient culture and civilization.

Gurudev Rabindra Nath Tagore used to explain his patriotism in the following inimitable words. I quote:

“I love India, not because I cultivate the idolatry of geography, nor because I have had the chance to be born in her soil but because she has saved through tumultuous ages the living words that have issued from the illuminated consciousness of her great ones”.
Unquote.

We in India share this noble sentiment of the great poet.

However in spite of this staunch patriotism which is ingrained in every right - thinking Indian, our civilization does not encourage or foster exclusiveness. Indian society is a vast ocean into which numerous streams have come down through the ages from time immemorial. It is a pluralistic, multi -faceted, multi - polar society which has always been open to good idea wherever they come from. The message of the Rig Veda is clear – “Let noble thoughts pervade and permeate us from all directions”. Our seers and saints dedicated themselves to this philosophy inspite of great upheavals in history. They inspired our society towards a global feeling. These thoughts, developed into a magnificent philosophy, has been nurtured by tolerance, compassion and dignity of human life without discrimination of big or small.

Therefore, we have been able to re- adapt, re- articulate and re-interpret our social values from age to age. In fact, with every new challenge that has been thrown up, there has been a creative interaction and response from our society.

When the British challenge came and we were politically subjugated the response came on the one hand from the social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidhasagar and on the other from the great spiritual leaders like Shri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Shri Ramana Maharshi, Shri Dayanand Saraswati and others. These leaders helped us to develop resilience so that we could stand erect without being swept off our feet in the wake the dazzling glamour of the Western civilization.

When you enter Parliament House in New Delhi through its main gate, the following Sanskrit adage inscribed on the main dome of the Central Hall attracts attention:

Ayam Nija Param Veti Ganana

Laghuchetasam;

Udaracharitanam Tu Vasudhaiva

Kutumbakam.

It means: A small mind quarrels over mine and thine ; but to a large-hearted, the whole world is but one family.

The concept of globalization flows from this spirit of universalisation and so it is easily acceptable to the India psyche. Long before the breakthroughs in Information and satellite technologies, our seers and sages could realize that in the ultimate analysis the human race was one casting aside all barriers and differences. We should develop our economy step by step and make it competitive with the rest of the world. This is our response to the new challenge of globalization.

From the concept of the world as a family; and the concept of the essential unity of mankind, we finally come to the concept of welfare of all beings, Bahujana sukhaya, bahujana hithaya. The message of the Upanishads is clear: "Let all walk together, eat together and work together so that

we all shine and prosper". What a noble thought! Indian philosophy never looks at the world with a divided or fragmented vision. It has bestowed love and wisdom on the entire humanity and its pursuit of truth continues.

Our prayers are never for ourselves alone but for all. Let all beings be happy; let the nature be in harmony with human beings and human beings be in harmony with nature. So, whether it is a question of globalization, whether it is a question of inter faith movement, you have within the Indian tradition these powerful concepts. These are concepts which are becoming increasingly relevant and a part of our mindset as we go on.

India with this tremendously powerful background and with the universalized values, has an important role to play in making the world understand India. This, I consider, is the prime responsibility of all the members of the Indian Diaspora each of whom should be our cultural ambassadors to the countries of their immigration so as to bring home Indian's message of essential unity of mankind and universality of brotherhood. This would help to build up a much better world to live in.

With these words I inaugurate this biennial celebrations of the ETA.

Thank you,